

The Cat

by Mebbo

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Summary: Rob is sprayed by a skunk, the kids must find a cure.

The Cat

The Cat ****"AAAAAAHHHHHHH!!!!" **** sounded a cry from the forest near Plumfield. Dan startled, looked up from his chores, and saw Rob was no longer where he had last seen him. Dan immediately dropped what he was doing and began to run toward the woods. Some of the other kids had heard it too. Nat and Tommy quickly followed Dan. Nan had to jump from the hay loft and was covered in dirt and hay. This was the third time Rob had wandered off this week while Mrs. Jo and Nick had been in town. There was just no one to watch him. The kids were too busy with school work and chores.

>"Ewww!" recoiled Dan as he reached Rob's side and discovered why the little boy had screamed. "Oh my god! Rob, what is that smell!" Dan said covering his mouth and nose. Rob innocently gazed up at him and said "I was following a big black and white cat and when I tried to pick it up it sprayed some funny stuff on me and ran off in the bushes. I don't think that kitty was very nice." Nat, Tommy, and Nan came running up. The smell hit Nan first making her take a step back and crinkle her nose. "What is that?!"
"It ain't champagne," Tommy commented plugging his nose.

>"There was a mean kitty that got me all wet." Rob said as he lifted his arms to smell himself.
"Whoa, Rob." Tommy said and signaled him to put his arms down.

> "Do I really smell that bad?" Rob looked as though he was going to cry.
 "No, No," Dan lied " lets just go to the house and get you cleaned up."

> The kids walked Rob back to the porch of the house where Bess sat painting "Oh my..." she uttered as the rank fumes reached her nose. Standing up, very unlady like, and bumping her easel she desperately searched for something to cover her nose. All that Bess could see was an old handkerchief she had been using to clean her paint brushes. Dan noticed her frenzy "Are you alright?" he asked rather amused. Finally giving up she put the soiled paint rag to her face and nodded

a quick yes as she tried to regain her composure by straightening her painting supplies.
 "What are we going to do?" Bess asked after being clued in on the situation and the origin of the smell.

> "What about manure?" suggested Tommy
 "Oh yeah, because we want to make him smell worse!" Bess spoke through the paint rag that she was holding up to her nose. Tommy and Bess began to argue as the other kids looked on, finally Nat pleaded "Calm down, you two!"

> "Yeah stop talking about Rob as if he wasn't here!" Nan said patting him on the back, he managed to give her a weak smile but it faded quickly.
 "We have got to think of some way to get the smell off him before Nick and Mrs. Jo come back." Dan said stating the obvious. "Any one have any ideas?"

> "Manure." Tommy said, Bess glared at him.
 "No! Any others?" Dan continued.

> "What about fire?" Tommy went on, "We could...." Dan interrupted him with a loud clearing of the throat when he noticed the look of terror on Rob's face.
 "Trust me, we won't be doing anything he suggest." Bess said to Rob trying to sound comforting through the rag.

> "Your NOT helping!" Dan glared at Tommy.
 "How about soap and water. It works on other smells. Why not this?" Nat said hopefully.

> "Yes, lets try that!" Nan piped hopefully.
 "Ok. You girls take Rob and give him a bath, without informing all Plumfield. Nat and me will try and get the smell out of the clothes and Tommy you go keep an eye out for Mrs. Jo" ordered Dan. Tommy quickly left to watch the gates of school. Nat and Dan turned to go get the water and a scrub brush.

> "Why do you get to wash the clothes?" Bess said as she stepped around in front of them to block their path.
 "Because we wouldn't want you to get your little fingers red now would we." Dan said in a cutesy manner as he gently pushed up the tip of her nose with his finger making her resemble a pig, "Now excuse me, Nat and I have some work to do." he made an attempt to move past her.

> "Don't patronize me Daniel!" Bess growled and blocked his path "When you where Rob's age would you have wanted a bunch of chatty girls other than your mom to bathe you? Especially two classmates, wouldn't you have been mortified?" Dan thought a moment " Due to the fact that I've never really had that option," He paused and smiled at her, Bess narrowed her eyes "Well I guess I would have been embarrassed... but not that embarrassed. "
 "Sooo..." Bess trying to coax the words out of him with hand movements.

> "So..." Dan said trying to figure out what Bess wanted him to say "So you want us to bathe him?"
 "Great idea, Dan!" chirped Bess happily and patted him on the back. Nat and Nan sighed, "Come on then lets go." Nat exasperated. "We need to find a place to wash him. Fast!"

> "How about the creek? No one should be down there." Nan suggested.
 "Good idea, Nan" Nat said and picked Rob up on his back .

Immediately the odor hit Nat's eyes and they began to water "We should get going. There's not a moment to lose."

> "To the creek!" Rob yelled in Nat's ear, making him flinch and every one else laughed. On the way Nat mumbled to Dan so Rob wouldn't hear "On the way back, it's your turn to carry him. "

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> "We scrubbed and scrubbed. We rubbed his skin raw with scrubbing. I can't believe the smell is still as strong as ever!" Dan exhaustedly

collapsed on the ground.
 "Oh yea, you think that's bad, look at my hands. They're swollen because I was washing the clothes so hard," Nan lifted her hands to show him. "And we didn't get any smell out of them either." she sighed. Nan and Dan were on break while Bess and Nat continued to work.

> "I think the smell starting to go away" Nat announced all of a sudden. Dan stood up and waded out in the creek to Rob. He sniffed the air.
 "No, you're just getting used to it." Dan said and waded back. Nat sighed and went back to work. After a while "It's hopeless" Nat declared and threw down the scrub brush in frustration.

> "Yea I agree this isn't working. The clothes smell exactly the same." Bess said coming over and sitting down.
 "What do you propose we do next?" Nan questioned.

> "I have no idea." Dan put his head down on the blanket "The smell is starting to make me sick."
 There was a long pause.

> "Well there's this one thing..."Bess began. Dan and Nan snapped to attention. "In France, Mother and I often frequented Le Merde Mieux, a spa famous for it's mud baths. Th..." Dan interrupted "I see what your saying but how are we going to get Rob to France and back before Mrs. Jo gets home?"

> Bess shot him a look.
 "Like I was saying before I was so ****stupidly**** interrupted, the ****mud**** was very good for your skin it left you as clean and as fresh as the day you were born. " Bess thought back with a smile then snapped back to reality then added "After you washed the mud off."

> "Good enough for me." Nan answered and stood up.
 "What's going on?" Nat asked as he walked over to the spot where everyone had been sitting. He had just finished drying off Rob who was now running around in make shift toga formed from a blanket.

> "Where goin' to bury Rob in a hole."
 "Sounds like a plan." Nat shrugged. "Me and Dan will go get the shovels."

> "Don't be silly Nat we can't dig Rob to France." Dan said with a laugh at his dull witted friend.
 Everyone stared, realizing his mistake.

> "I mean Bess and Nan will get the water." Dan covered, "Come on lets go!"

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> The mud was deep and thick. It gurgled and made popping noises.
 "Did your French mud do that?" Nan commented on the bubbles and at a big balloon of mud and air about to pop.

> "What are you talking about Nan, all mud does that," Bess looked over the edge and down into the pit. The mud balloon popped splattering Bess's face. "Don't say a word."
 Nan smiled trying to suppress a giggle.

> "Ready?" Dan asked. Nan nodded her head. "Ok Nat!" Nat lowered Rob into the goo. Rob was delighted finally being allowed to play in mud, in fact, he was being encouraged. "Yippie!!" Rob crowed and began to make a mud castle.
 "Well, now what?" Dan asked Bess.

> "We let him sit there for a little bit and when we come back the smell should be gone."
 "Lets go clean up down by the creek, we don't want Nick to know we were there." Nat said so they all head back down toward the creek.

>
 Minutes passed by and turned into an hour. They had been having so much fun they had forgotten their problems, assured that Bess's plan would work. On the way back Nat turned to Nan and said "Race you back to Rob."

> "Uh, no, I don't feel much like racing." With that she sprung ahead in a sprint and began to laugh.
 "No fair!" Nat called from way behind and ran to catch up with her. Bess and Dan remained walking down the path.

> Nan was almost there she could see the clearing where the hole was but there was something different this time. Nan could hear the faint sound of some one crying. She began to run faster fearing the worst. Harder her foot steps pounded the ground. Nan could only hear the sobbing. She reached the pit but unfortunately the hole wasn't a hole any more. The mud had dried during the hot noon day sun and had baked poor little Rob inside. All that remained visible was his face, fingers, and toes all wiggling frantically for freedom.
 Nan Screamed. Nat looked up startled and flew down to the clearing. Bess and Dan began to run.

> "What's the Wrong?!!" Nat said coming down the path. Nan turned to face him.
***"WE'VE PLANTED MRS. JO's ONLY SON!!!!!"**

> "DIG HIM OUT! DIG HIM OUT!"
 Nat got on his knees and began to dig with his hands. Bess and Dan came running up. Dan started digging Bess knelt down near Rob's head "Rob are you Ok?" she asked. Rob starred up at her "SOB* My nose itches. SOB*" he sniffed.

> "Oh." she said, relieved and amused. Bess scratched his nose. "Is that better?" she questioned with a comforting smile.
 "Yes." Rob sniffed again. Nan, Nat, and Dan feverishly dug at the ground. They couldn't use the shovels for the fear they might hit Rob. Everyone was so busy no one noticed Tommy trotting down the path he held a big juicy tomato. Tommy walked up to the group and observed what they were doing. He stood there silently watching, amused he took a bit of his tomato. It made a big gushy sound and spattered seeds on Bess.

> "Ackk! Tommy how long have you been there?!", " she looked down at her dress "Disgusting."
 "Long enough." He replied.

> "Are Mrs. Jo and Nick here?" Dan asked.
 "No, not yet. I just thought I would come see how you were doing," Tommy took another bite of his tomato, this time it splattered all over his shirt.

> "Don't just stand there help us!" Nan said almost done digging out Rob's right arm.
 Tommy just stood there with a stupid and innocent face eating his tomato, "Help with what?"

> "That's it, I have had it, Tommy!" Bess advanced toward him and smacked the tomato out of his hand. It flew through the air and landed splat in the pile of Rob's clothes.
 "Oh, Tommy, I am so sorry. I don't know what came over me." Bess placed her hand over her mouth, shocked over what she had just done.

> "That's Okay, Bess, but it looks like your going to have a bigger mess to clean up now." Tommy pointed to the pile of clothes.
 "Oh no!" Nat crawled over to the clothes "The smell plus tomato stains." He examined the pile. Opening the shirt it passed under his nose.

> "Wait a minute!" Nat shoved the shirt to his nose and took a deep breath "The smell..."
 "What about it?" Dan finished digging, now Nan and Bess where Rob stand up. He stank worse then before.

> "It's..." Nat sniffed it some more "The smell...the smell is-it's gone!"
 "What!" Everyone said at the same time.

> "The smell's gone! The tomato got the smell out!"
 "Really! you haven't just gotten used to it again, have you." Dan rushed over to the clothes. He took a deep breath, "He's right it's gone!"

> Nan ran up and grabbed Tommy by the shoulders and shook him vigorously "Tommy where did you get that tomato!"
 "I-I-I got it in Mrs. Jo's garden." before he had even finished speaking the group had picked up their belongings and was already half way down the path dragging poor little Rob behind them.

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> <div class="center">* * * * *</div>
> "Hello children." Jo said as Nick helped her down from the wagon.
All of the children of Plumfield where standing on the porch Tommy
had brought warning to everyone that Mrs. Jo and Nick had returned.
"How was your day? Nothing too exciting happened I hope." She said
with a brilliant smile. Nan, Nat, Bess, Dan, and Tommy eyed each
other. <br> "Mommy! Mommy!" Rob cried as he broke through the crowd.
Jo scooped him up in her arms.
> "Oh, look," Jo sniffed Rob's hair "You gave him a bath." <br> "It
was no problem Mrs. Jo." Dan stated "Me, Bess, Nat and Nan got done
with are chores early. So we figured we'd do you a favor."
> "That was sweet of you Dan." Jo patted his arm. <br> "And I kept
watch!" Tommy chimed in. Nan elbowed him in the gut he let out a loud
*Uffff*
> "Well," Jo said "Sounds like you all have had quite a day. I am
going to go help Asia with dinner." She stepped up and walked into
the house. <br> Jo went out into the garden with her basket. She
strode around the rows of greenery looking for something to have for
dinner. Jo stop and look down
><div class="center"><strong>"What on earth happened to all the
tomatoes!"</strong> <strong>**
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file.